

Civil War's 'fractional' bills have multiplied in value

By Roger Boye

This week's column answers more questions from Chicago Tribune readers.

Q—For many years my family has owned a U.S. paper bill valued at 25 cents! Is it counterfeit or for real? The item pictures one Robert J. Walker.

L. K., Chicago

A—Uncle Sam printed several types of "fractional currency" from 1862 until the mid-1870s to help relieve a severe coin shortage caused by the Civil War. Bill denominations ranged from 3 to 50 cents.

The item you describe probably entered circulation in 1874 or 1875. A "fine condition" speci-

men might retail today for about \$8 and a "crisp, uncirculated" bill would go for \$30 or more. Walker was secretary of the Treasury from 1845 to 1849.

Q—A few years ago you described a 1982 dime that sells for \$100 or more. Since then I've saved dozens of 1982s, but I've lost the newspaper clipping. What should I look for on my coins?

F. D., Palos Heights

A—All 1982 dimes in circulation are supposed to carry a "P" (for Philadelphia) or "D" (for Denver) mint mark, but a few error specimens have no mint letter. Those rarities often retail for as much as \$150 each, depending on condition.